

## **Minnesota Charities Spreading the Word**

**In a tight economy, many foundations have found that public advocacy is as critical as the services they provide**

By Jean Hopfensperger

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When the Hennepin County Medical Center launched a foundation last month, the first grant did not go to a traditional target such as a "safety net fund" for poor patients or promising medical research. Instead, the \$30,000 grant went to a public information campaign calling attention to the impact that roughly \$43 million in state budget cuts will have on the medical center.

... Minnesota is home to about 1,400 philanthropic foundations, which spend more than \$1 billion a year to keep rivers clean, residents fed and children educated -- among other things. But the recession and government budget cuts have many eyeing the power of the people.

A five-year study of 15 Minnesota advocacy groups funded by local foundations showed that for every dollar invested in advocacy and community organizing, \$138 was gained in the form of affordable housing, health care and other tangible results.

"Historically, many foundations have been reluctant to take risks," said Aaron Dorfman, executive director of the National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy in Washington, D.C., which released the study last month.

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